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The child is delivered on a mat or cloth placed on the ground, and the navel cord is cut with scissors, leaving a length of three finger-breadths. The end of the cord is cauterized with a red-hot iron, treated with oil, and bandaged with a piece of cloth. If the infant emits no cry after birth, the midwife shakes it or strikes it smartly to start its breathing, but should this be insufficient, a large *gammelle*, or wooden bowl used to serve food at feasts, is overturned so as to cover the child, and this is beaten for a few moments, a procedure which is held both to awaken the child and to give it needed warmth. After being bathed in tepid water in which calabash leaves have been steeped, about a teaspoonful of muscat, palm oil, and sugar is fed the infant. An abdominal band is put on in place, and the child is dressed in a nightgown tightly pinned, so as to envelop its form and cause it to grow straight-limbed and firm of muscle. The process of moulding the head is begun at once, pressure being applied once a day for the first three days of life. The nostrils are pinched every few moments during the first day of life and several times each of the succeeding days, to cause them to be narrow. This matter of shaping the head and compressing the nostrils is sufficiently important to have figured in the accounts of birth conventions as given by a number of persons, though there is some disagreement as to the details of the practice, some maintaining that the head is shaped every eight days for two months and the nostrils compressed many times a day for a period of eight days. The baby continues to be bathed in tepid water, and, if born during the winter months, a fire always burns in the house.

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The placenta is buried in a special hole dug in the room where the birth occurred, the preferred places for this being beneath the bed or at the threshold. Any of the women in attendance may bury the placenta, though usually the midwife sees to its disposal. If delivery takes place during the day, it is buried immediately after ejection, but if the birth has oc-

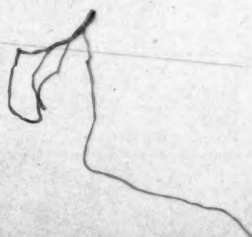
BIRTH, CHILDHOOD, AND ADOLESCENCE 93

curred during the night, they wait for daylight. Salt is added to the hole, "so that the evil eye cannot take it (for magic purposes), for with salt it spoils very quickly." Neither the hole nor its contents are held to be of future importance, and though the child may be shown where the cord and placenta were buried, by that time nothing will remain of it which might be of use to a maker of charms. After three or four days the cord falls off and muscat powder is applied to heal the wound cleanly. The bit of cord is saved, and if the child becomes ill, this is boiled and the water given as a drink. Occasionally an entire umbilical cord is dried and retained; and one woman spoke of the cord of her mother as still being in existence.

The mother is also bathed in water in which calabash leaves and other ingredients have been steeped, and after being carefully dried, a band is tightly tied about her abdomen to give her support. A cloth is placed to cover the vagina, which is not cleansed until the following day, though after that the vaginal region is washed twice daily for some forty days. Red wine is given to women immediately after delivery to sustain them until food can be prepared. Bananas, salt fish, milk, chocolate, and a dish of stew made of chicken and rice are offered, and in most instances the women eat heartily.

The cloths used during childbirth are carefully guarded, the woman herself or a trusted member of her family seeing to the task of washing them, so as to prevent their being used for evil magic. If a miscarriage occurs, the fetus is buried in a hole dug in the floor of the woman's house while the woman herself is bathed and otherwise cared for as in the case of a normal delivery.

A woman is usually up and about three or four days after the birth of her child, or sooner if there is no one to help her with her household duties, in which case she may even be obliged to perform the heavy work of going to the river for water within the week, though she is careful not to bend down



846 or to get her feet wet. When possible, however, she waits for from fifteen to twenty days before doing this kind of work, and, in any event, she will not bathe in cold water until more than a month has passed. A week or two after giving birth she may resume her selling in the market, and two months after her child is born she will take up work in her garden.²

852 [851] During this period of the mother's recovery the child is ritually introduced to his world and to the spirits which govern it. Three or four days after the cord drops, the midwife, water and a candle in hand, presents the child to the sun and the four corners of the earth, speaking an invocation which none but women of this profession may know or hear spoken. The child is then carried into the courtyard before the house, though he may not be taken elsewhere for as many as three weeks. When he is taken across the threshold for the first time, he is cradled in the left arm of the one who carries him; in the left hand water is held, while the right hand holds a lighted candle. Water is thrown in three directions, outward from the door and to each side of it, as the child is taken about the outside of the house. This rite is repeated by everyone present at the time, but water is "thrown" only once.

854 [851] Though it is said by some that a child is not given a charm immediately after birth unless it is ill, it is nevertheless customary to place a cord about the neck of an infant on the day it is born, to remain there until some three or four years later, when it wears out and is lost. There is no difference of opinion, however, on the point that if a baby falls ill soon after birth, steps must be taken to give it spiritual protection. A vodun priest is called to make a charm for it to wear, while, in addition, another charm is placed in the house to guard its inhabitants against "all bad things," such as the evil eye—since this tends to give babies convulsions—demons, werewolves, or the "little folk" who bring bad magic. A *jok* against harm resulting from even unconscious envy is also provided, since an individual who admires a baby because of

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[854] Breast-feeding begins on the first day, but, if the milk does not come, the mother goes to a woman "specialist" who knows the herbs which are believed to induce the flow. When the mother is ill or tubercular, the infant is given to a wet-

nurse. Once he has begun to nurse, he is fed whenever he cries, and as soon as he can sit up he is given the same food as the mother eats. For the first two or three months after the birth of her child a woman refrains from eating egg-plant, fresh fish — although she may eat salt fish — white beans or any others larger than Congo peas, pork, lard, and all fruit.

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301 The ears of a female child are pierced when she is about a month old for the gold ear-rings which are worn by girls and women of all ages. If the parents cannot afford them at the time, however, thread is placed in the holes until a sum sufficient to provide this important trinket has been accumulated.

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854 A child is taught to sit up beginning with the end of the third or fourth month, and by the time he is six or seven months old he can sit quite well; girls are believed to be more precocious than boys in acquiring this skill. When about ten months old, or sooner, an older sister, a little girl, or the father or mother takes the child by the hand and teaches him to walk, later allowing him to hold one end of a stick for sup-

[1754]
[1789] port. A child is never left alone, for fear of the evil eye or of werewolves, so that a mother does not even cross the threshold of her house without taking her baby with her, while if for some reason she cannot avoid leaving her child while she is in the yard, an empty bottle is placed near its pillow as a pro-

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763- tective device. Teething is a matter of importance, since the attitudes of the parents toward a child may be determined by the first teeth to appear. If these are cut in the upper jaw, it is said that the child's mother will survive his father, and when this occurs, the mother takes every precaution to conceal the fact from her husband, so he will not hate the child. Others hold, however, that the appearance of an upper tooth first denotes that either the father or the mother is soon to die.*

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861 Instruction starts early in the life of a child. Beginning with

[1804-1843]

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175 A cultivator who loafs on his assigned job shall spend twenty-four
 566 hours in jail for his first offense and lose his wages; for a second
 671 offense he must work on public projects. Field labor shall be regu-
 24 larly carried on from Monday morning until Friday evening, except
 for legal holidays; work begins at dawn, continues except for a
 half-hour at breakfast until noon, stops then for two hours, and is
 [943] once more resumed until sunset. Pregnant females are to be assigned
 to light work only, and after the fourth month of pregnancy need
 do no field work. Four months after delivery, a mother is to return
 • [846] to field work, but with three hours a day less than before, until she
 has weaned her child. Disobedience and insult to overseers are
 punishable by imprisonment. Since Saturdays, Sundays, and holi-
 [527] days are free, there is to be no dancing or any other festivity by
 night or day from Monday through Friday.

175 On each estate is to be a hierarchy of directors, all of whom the
 671 workers shall obey. In ascending order, these men are drivers (or
 473 squad foremen),⁴⁰ jobbers, sublessees, lessees, proprietors and man-
 24 agers, overseers of districts, and police.

In establishing a system of remuneration Boyer kept the accus-
 175 tomed method of allotting a proportion of the marketed crop to the
 465 workers in lieu of hourly or daily wages. In any season from a
 24 quarter to a half of the gross receipts of the estates was to go to the
 laborers, the exact proportion in any year to be determined by the
 government. It was assumed by Boyer and Inginac that there would
 be an added inducement to work if the laborers' share were dis-
 tributed not equally, but rather in proportion to the merit and worth
 of the individual, these evaluations to be made by the recommenda-
 tion of overseers.

• 175 Enforcement of the Code was placed in the hands of local justices
 692 and the army. Soldiers were to be assigned to each plantation, re-
 24 ceiving their living from it, in return preserving order and routine.
 Although the whip was once more prohibited, steady labor might
 still be enforced by other means; the law definitely stated that soldiers
 were to discipline the lazy, the lawless, and the vagrant. Local
 justices were to deal with any civil difficulties arising in the execution

[92] 40. The word "driver" was commonly used in West Indian slave colonies with no
 other meaning than that attached to the word when one speaks of a man "driving" his
 horses. It is not necessary to beat a horse to make it go properly; a word of direction
 may suffice.

DOMESTIC LIFE OF THE PEASANTS

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the market, the women sit all day in the broiling sun, and in Port-au-Prince at least, sometimes sleep near by for the night, in order to complete their purchases and sales and to get their fill of companionable gossip. They are often accompanied by the youngest of their children, some of whom have to be carried.

Some observers profess to see evidences of a matriarchate among the peasants, for as a general rule the woman attends to the business dealings of the market place, handles the money, directs her children, and manages the household. If the man has more than one placée spouse, complete control of the farm is the woman's during the absence of her man. It is a superficial judgment, however, to speak of the peasant mother as a matriarch. The man owns the land, chooses his women, calls for help at the moment he pleases for preparation of the ground for planting; and when he knows his end to be near, summons all his families and disposes of his property as he sees fit. His decision is final. But he is no more a patriarch than his woman is a matriarch: they are economic partners in a struggle for existence.

By our standards, the woman is inferior to the man not only in rights but in being one spouse of several. He may contract several unions, while she may have only one. She does more steady, if not more actual, physical labor than the man. When he is at home, she must offer him the best of the food. As usual in simple societies, however, the issue rarely arises as to superiority or inferiority of the sexes. Customary behavior is followed without much question.

There is one great contrast between élite and peasant women, in the matter of childbirth. The élite mother takes as much care of herself during pregnancy and parturition as would an American woman in well-to-do circles. The peasant mother, on the contrary, cannot allow herself the luxury of medical attention, nor can she spare the time to rest quietly. Like many so-called "primitive" women, she apparently finds herself little incommoded either by pregnancy or birth. Babies are born frequently in the market place, the mother having come down from the hills only that day with her goods. It is not unusual to hear of the birth of a child in a roadside ditch or in a grove by the path to and from the market town. The care given mother and infant is primitive: the navel cord is cut with a sharp stone or a piece of broken glass; a short rest is thought sufficient before the mother resumes her task. As might be expected, the death rate from infection is high and women age prematurely.

Parents are generally kind to their children, so far as physical

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Spring water in the country districts is
frequently

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[272] luted by all sorts of excreta; the watering of milk is a common practice, and samples of milk have been generally found to contain many times the normal amount of bacilli. The cases of tuberculosis are practically always complicated by malaria.

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[273] Dysentery, when caused by bacilli, is epidemic in nature. In Haiti this form, known as "colerin," annually affects about a quarter of the rural population. Another type, caused by a variety of amoeba, affects another ten or twenty per cent, according to the region. Enteritis is less serious than dysentery but just as prevalent, being caused by protozoa and intestinal worms. Poor diet, the abuse of alcohol, premature weaning, and unwise nursing are also responsible. [853] Granular conjunctivitis affected sixteen per cent of the children examined by the Rockefeller Foundation.

Cancer seems to strike only a normal number of Haitians; goitre is common in the mountain districts; leprosy has become a menace in the West and South; elephantiasis is present, particularly in the South; gusarola (characterized by patches of skin assuming different color) is fairly common in the Cul-de-Sac plain; chicken pox, influenza, and meningitis epidemics are occasionally serious.

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462 The health of the peasant women is seriously and continuously
482 endangered by their mode of life and work. It is customary for
145 females, from girlhood onward, to carry heavy burdens on their heads—over steep paths in the mountains, along rocky trails, up hill and down. The commonest sight in Haiti is to see a woman swinging along with a great load of fuel, a tin of water, a bundle of building material, a basket of fruit, on her head. Cranial bones are flattened, the spine is bent, internal organs are strained or damaged. For ill-nourished persons to carry heavy weights for long distances with [461] little rest means undue pressure on the heart and lungs, and so an [843] increasing tendency to cardiac and pulmonary infections as well as chronic anemia. Overwork frequently results in miscarriages.

P44 As has been said, childbirth often occurs by the roadside, on the way to market, or in the market place. In no case can a peasant woman remain in bed for a proper period either before or after [846] parturition. Midwives are untrained; they use primitive methods [164] which inevitably result in defective development of infants, lessened resistance to disease, high infant mortality, and a prevalence of abdominal diseases in women. Pressure of work, whether in the field or on the way to market, makes a mother soon stop nursing her P53